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Address

of

Henry M. Rogers

Late Acting Asst. Paymaster, U. S. Navy

to the

Commandery of the State of Massachusetts

of the

Military Order of the Loyal Legion

of the United States

at its

Meeting in Boston, November 3, 1915

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1865

1916



April Fifteenth

The principles of 1865 are the principles of 1916
and will so continue even unto the end.
The Eternal Laws always pull one way.

LIBRARY

1916

The Inspiration of the Loyal Legion

Mr. Commander and Companions of the Loyal Legion :

What I have to say this evening is not so much history as personal confession. I shall try to tell you what the inspiration of the Loyal Legion is to me, in the hope that I may emphasize its permanent power for good and the responsibilities that rest upon us if we would have it a living influence and not a dead thing, an outworn casket that once ensouled virile men.

And first of all let us consider whence and how did the Loyal Legion come to be. Personally, I always think of it as the first flower that sprang from the grave of Abraham Lincoln, for his death and its birth bear the date April 15, 1865. It was conceived in that dark hour of grave doubt when no one knew how wide spread was the conspiracy which had murdered our great leader and stricken down high officers of his government. It sprang into life from the high purpose and firm resolve of some of the bravest hearts of the North to make eternal the principles for which Abraham Lincoln, their patron Saint, had lived, suffered and died.

The tears of the Founders of the Loyal Legion shed at the grave of the martyred President moistened the cradle of this new-born infant. You realize, therefore, that this was not a joyous birth, nor one of elation, but rather one of anguish and sorrow, and of dread uncertainties and responsibilities.

The Loyal Legion, to my mind, to-day is the concrete, crystallized expression of earnest men who hated human slavery, who fought for human rights, who believed in the United States of America as a Union and were determined to perpetuate the high ideals of those States; of men, who, in the exigencies brought into being by Lincoln's death, pledged anew to the great cause which they, themselves, had helped to win, their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors.

It necessarily follows that our Loyal Legion is no place for triflers and pleasure-seekers, nor is it a club for non-thinking and unpatriotic men, but rather a temple of another kind of men; for men of high purpose and firm resolve, as its founders were.

We, the gray-haired, who are living on borrowed time, who have shed our tears at Lincoln's grave and at the cradle of the Loyal Legion; we, who lived through that fateful 15th day of April, 1865, and who swore by the God of our Country that the principles that we had fought and he had died for should not perish from the Earth, have no need to say whence come to us the Inspiration of the Loyal Legion.

But you younger members of the Order may well ask, what has this to do with us? We are not our fathers; we did not share their perils; we were not of those fateful times! Save as history, whence comes our inspiration?

My answer is two-fold. First—it is an axiom of life that man only gets by giving: we, the gray-haired, therefore, give to you of our inspiration: you are by our sides and we share with you our stories of moving acci-

dents by flood and field: we tell you what the spirit of the Loyal Legion is and ever has been to us and impress upon your hearts what we ourselves believe: we point to the Roster of our Order and show you the names of our exalted Companions, now your Companions. We ask you, confidently, is it not something, even now, for you to say, in very truth, I am the Companion of Grant and Sherman and Sheridan and Farragut and Porter, and of the thousands of others who stood by President Lincoln in his dire extremity? To say it, too, in the presence of those who themselves helped make those patriotic names to endure through the ages?

And, second—you in your turn give to us of your youth, of your enthusiasm growing out of this union of old and young, this joining of our yesterdays and your to-days,—for we need you as you need us, and, when we pass on, as soon we must, to join the great majority, “those other living, named the dead,” you will have memories never to be effaced to pass on as inspiration to your children and your children’s children.

The Commandery of the State of Massachusetts was instituted March 4, 1868—the fourth of the Great State Commanderies—preceded only by Pennsylvania, New York and Maine. My own election to this Commandery was on the 7th day of July, 1868—my insignia bear the number 853. To-day the number of insignia issued is upwards of 17,000.

I may be pardoned for making personal allusions in this presence, if only to show that whatever of inspiration the Loyal Legion has been to me has lasted through seven and forty years, and in the hope that this mere

record of years may stimulate your faith and be accepted by you as proof of the enduring quality of that inspiration which burns to-day in my heart more glowingly than ever before, for never more than to-day has our Country needed the service and the inspiration of our great Order.

In you younger members, I repeat, must center ere long the future of the Loyal Legion. It is your right to receive as it is our privilege to commit to you this sacred flower of our early manhood as your inheritance. As your fathers' sons, we love you; and as your fathers' sons, we trust you; and while we are permitted we shall stand by your side, to advise and encourage; to sustain and inspire you.

Does anyone of you ask how long will this organization endure? I answer—just so long as the members of it are true to the principles of the founders and no longer. When we and you and your successors cease to be true to those principles, this Loyal Legion, which carries an inspiration in its very name, should cease to be.

And this leads us directly to the vital question—what were those principles of the founders? What was and is their significance?

They were two in number and only two embodied in the Constitution of the Order, Belief in God, Fidelity to Country.

These two principles are the simplest and the most far-reaching principles that man has to-day, or has had, or will have so long as man endures. The essence of the one is of divine conception. Belief in God is the foundation of human progress and of individual growth and character, and a true understanding of its limitless scope

rests on contemplation. Fidelity to Country deals with the complexities of life in an organized community; it shifts its point of view to meet the ever-changing conditions of organized, political life, but never changes its character.

These two principles, Belief in God, Fidelity to Country, are basic. They are not shibboleths, nor war cries; they are not mere declarations; they are the essence of the Infinite; they are to be lived. They are of man's bone and sinew; the breath of his nostrils; the very mainsprings of his daily, hourly thought and act. They are the soul—the ultimate you.

You remember when Oliver Cromwell was asked how he expected to make his hinds the equals in battle of those who had loyalty to the King in their hearts, he flashed back the answer, "By putting into the hearts of these hinds a greater thing than loyalty to a King and that is loyalty to the Great God Almighty, the King of Kings!" Hence came the Ironsides.

Do we not recognize in our daily lives the difference between the man who believes in God and the man who only says he does? Between the man who simply talks true allegiance and fidelity to his Country and the man who is faithful to it?

The thought of the real man is of service to God and his Country. He does not substitute for patriotism the contemptible and degrading question,—where do I come in? To him—devotion to God, to Country, are manifestations on earth of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. His brotherhood begins at home. It must begin there, but it does not end there. His loyal-

ty to God and Country is one whole and entire thing and knows no division; he knows no half-hearted allegiance. He does not worship God *and* the Devil. He does not hate and injure his neighbor to prove his universal brotherhood.

This is the ultimate, the enduring inspiration of the Loyal Legion as I interpret it. On these two principles, belief in God and unswerving allegiance and devotion to the United States of America, this Order is built, and every other purpose is subordinate to them.

The great Library; the great Museum of Memorabilia of the Civil War you have gathered together, attest the spirit of inspired service which has animated many, but one man (Colonel Arnold A. Rand) above all others, to perpetuate the inspiration and name of the Commandery of Massachusetts and its pre-eminent place in the Order.

It is for you and for me and for our successors to say shall this organization endure? Shall our fidelity to God and to Country proclaim that we are in very truth a Loyal Legion? Shall we not pledge ourselves anew here and now that whenever our Country calls upon her sons, for unselfish service, for absolute fidelity, for unquestioning devotion, she will not call in vain on those who carry in their hearts the inspiration of the Loyal Legion?

HENRY M. ROGERS.




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